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## Marshall Digital Scholar

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0873: The Fake News and Information Literacy  
Project

Digitized Manuscript Collections

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Fall 10-25-2021

**West Virginia Participant 10 (White/male/20), interviewed on  
October 25, 2021**

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# Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

## The Fake News and Information Literacy Project

Stephen M. Underhill, PhD, Principal Investigator



Marshall University IRB

Approved on:	9/17/21
Expires on:	9/15/21
Study number:	1779793

### Key Information

You are invited to participate in a research study. Research studies are designed to gain scientific knowledge that may help other people in the future. You may or may not receive any benefit from being part of the study. Your participation is voluntary. Please take your time to make your decision, and ask your research investigator or research staff to explain any words or information that you do not understand. The following is a short summary to help you decide why you may or may not want to be a part of this study. Information that is more detailed is listed later on in this form.

The purpose of this study is to understand the Appalachian experience with fake news and how people determine what is/not credible online. We expect that you will be in this research study for one hour. Though you will be anonymous and your identity will be kept secret, a redacted copy of your interview transcript will be posted online on Marshall University's Digital Scholar website ([https://mds.marshall.edu/oral\\_history/](https://mds.marshall.edu/oral_history/)).

You will be asked 64 questions. Your dialogue will be recorded on Microsoft Teams and housed on Marshall University's OneDrive, which is password protected. The recording will be destroyed at the end of the semester (during finals week). To protect your privacy, you will be identified by your state of residence, race, sex, age and participant number. For example, the Digital Scholar website will catalogue your interview with a pseudonym like "Kentucky Participant 5 (White/Male/65), interviewed on October 5, 2021." Please avoid mentioning your name or other identifying information in the interview. Your name will not be on the transcript. The name of the interviewer will not be included in the transcript or otherwise on Marshall University's Digital Scholar website. All identifying information will be removed before transcripts are posted online. But once transcripts are posted on Marshall University's Digital Scholar website, they will be permanent. We will not be able to remove them.

### How Many People Will Take Part In The Study?

About 24 people every semester people will take part in this study. A total of 24 subjects are the most that would be able to enter the study per semester.

### What Is Involved In This Research Study?

You will be asked a series of 64 open-ended questions about your thoughts and feelings on fake news and disinformation online. You will be asked about your opinion of sensitive social questions like issues of race, class, religion, etc.

With your consent, this interview will be recorded. You will only be identified as "you" during the interview. The Microsoft Teams recording, which will be with the camera turned off, will be stored on Marshall University's OneDrive and will only be shared with the FYS small group, the FYS graduate assistant and the professor. These people will use the recording to verify consent and make a

Subject's Initials \_\_\_\_\_

redacted transcript. Definitized transcripts will be uploaded to Marshall University's Digital Scholar website ([https://mds.marshall.edu/oral\\_history/](https://mds.marshall.edu/oral_history/)).

### *What Are Your Rights As A Research Study Participant?*

You may choose to not take part in the study. You may leave the study up to the point that the interview is complete. Once the redacted transcript is posted on the website a participant may not withdraw. Refusing to participate or leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide to stop participating in the study we encourage you to talk to the investigators or study staff first.

The study investigator may stop you from taking part in this study at any time if he/she believes it is in your best interest; if you do not follow the study rules; or if the study is stopped.

### *Detailed Risks Of The Study*

Because the recording will be destroyed at the end of the semester, and because the only a deidentified redacted transcript will be posted online, there is no foreseeable risk in the study.

### *What About Confidentiality?*

We will do our best to make sure that your personal information is kept confidential. However, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Federal law says we must keep your study records private. Nevertheless, under unforeseen and rare circumstances, we may be required by law to allow certain agencies to view your records. Those agencies would include the Marshall University IRB, Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and the federal Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP). This is to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety. If we publish the information we learn from this study, you will not be identified by name or in any other way.

### *What Are The Costs Of Taking Part In This Study?*

There are no costs to you for taking part in this study. All the study costs, including any study tests, supplies and procedures related directly to the study, will be paid for by the study.

### *Will You Be Paid For Participating?*

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

### *Whom Do You Call If You Have Questions Or Problems?*

For questions about the study or in the event of a research-related injury, contact the study investigator, Stephen Underhill at 304-696-3020 or at [underhills@marshall.edu](mailto:underhills@marshall.edu). You should also contact the investigator if you have a concern or complaint about the research.

Subject's Initials \_\_\_\_\_

For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity (ORI) at (304) 696-4303. You may also call this number if:

- You have concerns or complaints about the research.
- The research staff cannot be reached.
- You want to talk to someone other than the research staff.

Did you receive a copy of the consent form?

Please say Yes or No

Do you agree to take part in this study and confirm that you are 18 years of age or older?

Please say Yes or No

Have you had a chance to ask questions about being in this study and have had those questions answered?

Please say Yes or No

What is today's date?

Subject's Initials \_\_\_\_\_

The participant agreed to the terms of the consent.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about when you first started using social media and news started on your feed like Facebook or Twitter.

**Participant:** I would say I started social media. Well, specific social media or just what I use?

**Interviewer:** In general, any type of social media.

**Participant:** I would say I started probably early middle school. And back then it wasn't really news. I'd say it was just like close friends posting stuff like that, but I would say news probably started, maybe early high school. So probably like 2016ish.

**Interviewer:** On a on a normal day, how do you generally use the Internet?

**Participant:** I mainly just use it for social media, for entertainment. I don't really get my news from social media as much.

**Interviewer:** What type of websites do you usually visit?

**Participant:** For news or just social media.

**Interviewer:** Just web sites, any website.

**Participant:** I would say just Twitter. I get on that a lot. YouTube, I use that a lot.

**Interviewer:** So, in the last week, what did you search for online?

**Participant:** What have I searched for?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant:** Does my answer has to be like specific to news or?

**Interviewer:** No, it's just. What did you search for online last week?

**Participant:** OK, I've been doing a lot of stuff with my car so mainly like car parts and stuff I need.

**Interviewer:** So what websites do you generally use to pass the time when you're bored? What do you do on those sites? And why do you visit those sites in particle?

**Participant:** I usually just go to YouTube and sometimes I watch. I'll just like funny videos or videos that increase my knowledge of like cars and stuff like that.

**Interviewer:** What do you think other people are doing? Both people you know, people don't know. How do you think other people pass time online?

**Participant:** I would say they probably do the same thing as me. Just try to pass time by looking at funny videos or things that entertain them.

**Interviewer:** What type of devices do you access the Internet with? Phones, tablets, laptops? Which do you use the most and the least?

**Participant:** I would probably say I usually use my phone, my laptop. And I don't know if you'd count a game or not, but I would say I use my phone the most and probably my laptop to least.

**Interviewer:** What media forums do you visit like Twitter or Reddit? And when, why, or for what purpose do you use them? Please share any that you tried to avoid and your reasons for avoiding.

**Participant:** I would say I use Twitter the most. I usually use it to get, use it for like movie information and like news about upcoming movies and like cast information and stuff like that. I would say I probably avoid Instagram the most because Instagram has a lot of people that don't really know what they're talking about, and it's usually just more opinion based and kind of like fake news if you'd say.

**Interviewer:** When thinking about people that you most likely disagree with, please describe which forums you think they likely use and why.

**Participant:** I would probably say Instagram. A lot of lot of people are posting just different things that usually aren't true.

**Interviewer:** Describe for me what you do when you want to find out something factual and how people around you find out something factual.

**Participant:** If it's something I need to know or try to find factual things, I would just Google it and I would click on the first one that pops up, scroll through and read it and then get the basis for it. And then I would go to a different website and just kind of use it to check in the first one. And just go on from there, just click multiple websites and see a summary of which information is correct. And I would say for the people around me, what they use is probably just straight up television news. Just WSAZ and that kind of thing.

**Interviewer:** Everyone comes across things that surprise them on social media between advertising, news, and commentary. Please describe a time when you doubted something was trustworthy, or made you distrust its author or its purpose.

**Participant:** Some news articles that you would click on just from Google would have a lot of false ads on them that you can just tell aren't very true.

**Interviewer:** Now please share a time when you talked to your friends or family about such content.

**Participant:** I'm not really sure. I can't think of one off the top of my head.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about a time you saw such content discussed on the news.

**Participant:** You see a lot of that kind of stuff on Reddit where people discuss stuff back and forth, and usually no one knows the right answer to whatever the situation maybe.

**Interviewer:** If there are any social media sites that you find generally untrustworthy, what makes them so?

**Participant:** I would say Wikipedia is sometimes not always true because a lot of people can just go on there and edit whatever they like and all they have to provide is a little information that proves that they actually know a lot about the topic.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about a time finding a conspiracy theory.

**Participant:** I see a lot of conspiracy theories on Twitter. They're usually very far off and very farfetched and not always accurate.

**Interviewer:** If this applies, please tell me of a time when you shared content you thought was true, but later learned was not true.

**Participant:** I shared a post not too long ago with one of my friends and it was on Instagram. And it wasn't true at all, and it's very disappointing because I think it had to do with a new show or game coming out. I think it was a game actually and it was way off because the people who made the game came out a few days later and stated what was actually correct.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about a time when a search engine like Google or Yahoo or Bing seemed to give you what it thought you were looking for based on what you had already searched for.

**Participant:** Yeah, I would look-up car parts and it would like start suggesting new things that I don't really need and that kind of relate to what I've been searching up.

**Interviewer:** Describe a time when you noticed that search results seemed somehow tailored to you. If anywhere or where on the news have you seen this discussed?

**Participant:** The other day I was looking for a car part and I started looking them up on my computer and then I noticed on my phone—totally a different device that I was getting ads for what I was looking up. And it was just. It was kind of strange.

**Interviewer:** What personal information will provide on social media companies like YouTube or Google?

**Participant:** Usually, I don't try to use personal information on third party sites. I would try to just stick to the basics like Google or Youtube because most of them are interconnected anyway and they share all of your information with one another.

**Interviewer:** Tell me the ways that you try to protect your personal information online.

**Participant:** The other day there was a website that required me to send a photo ID because I assume it was such a large purchase. But they needed the ID and the debit card that was used for the purchase and I had to blur out certain things because it was just a little sketchy because I've never had to do that before for a website. So, I didn't really want them getting my information.

**Interviewer:** What do you think other people around you do in situations like that?

**Participant:** I would say they do the same thing as me, just blurring out different parts of cards and sending it in like that.

**Interviewer:** What have you heard about protecting your personal information on the news or heard your friends and family discuss it?

**Participant:** I would say my family doesn't really like putting their debit card like on their phone because they think people are going to get into it and find it, which I would say is very true. I would say mostly your phone, mainly Apple is pretty secure with stuff like that.

**Interviewer:** How have you responded to how Internet companies try to customize their platforms.



**Participant:** Small. I would say I don't really experience that a lot. And that I haven't really seen much of a problem with it.

**Interviewer:** Well, what have you heard others discuss about this?

**Participant:** I'm not very sure. I haven't heard a lot or anything about Internet providers.

**Interviewer:** If you were to explain to your friends or family about how false information spreads and can be found on the Internet or how to avoid false information, what would you say?

**Participant:** I would say stay away from social media mainly, like Facebook is a big one where there's a lot of false information and I would say just stick to credible sources like local news and news outlets such as CNN and Fox News and that kind of thing.

**Interviewer:** What do you think determines what is seen online or how does it work? Who benefits? Who do you think made this system? What do you think controls information online or in our apps?

**Participant:** I would say mainly the people that created the apps, they try and learn from what you've clicked on and what you've been through to personalize it for you.

**Interviewer:** The Internet is full of stories that divide people about the coronavirus, the Capital Riot, Stop the Steal, Antifa, Black Lives Matter, climate change, QAnon, and the political parties. If you were to decide, how you would like schools or the news to talk about what controls Internet and what is seen?

**Participant:** I would say schools should just stay away from it because I would say they're trying to protect their students from what the news is actually portraying. And they should just let the news say what they want instead of trying to pick and choose what the students are hearing and what they're seeing.

**Interviewer:** Well, if you happen to see stories about Stop the Steal and the Capitol Riot what do you make of why the protesters were there? Why do you think some dressed like hunters and trappers or in animal pelts, with Norse tattoos or Roman soldiers, or in groups like Cowboys for Trump? What does this mean for stories about the voter fraud and voting rights? Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

**Participant:** I'd say I mainly learned it from Twitter. I saw a lot of videos and stuff on Twitter about the capitol and them storming it and to this day I don't really understand why they even did that.

**Interviewer:** If you happen to hear about the QAnon movement, what do you make of how they talk about themselves or what others say about them? Why do you think we hear so many conflicting stories? Where did we learn this and what does it mean to you?

**Participant:** I don't think I've heard about this movement.

**Interviewer:** All right, if you happen to be following the story of the coronavirus. What sense do you have of the different information that was out there where people get vaccinated and or wear masks? Why do you think we hear so many conflicting stories? What do you think causes the different opinions? Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

**Participant:** I would say the main reason people don't want to wear mask is because obviously everyone hates wearing a mask, but as soon as one person starts doing it more and more people start doing it and then it just becomes a wave of people not wearing masks or getting vaccinated. A lot of people get fake news from the Internet about vaccinations and how they're tracking you and kind of ignorant things like that.

**Interviewer:** If you happen to be following coverage on the House Select Committee to Investigate the Capitol Riot, what sense do you make of how old Republicans and Democrats disagree over the scope and the purpose of the committee? Where did you learn this and what does it mean to you?

**Participant:** I don't think I have heard anything on this topic.

**Interviewer:** Alright.

**Interviewer:** Now, if you happen to see stories about Black Lives Matters and Antifa, what do you make of the protests after George Floyd was killed? Why do you think some burned buildings or other property? Why did protesters denounce police and where did you learn this and what does it mean?

**Participant:** I would say that the protests are important and that they need to be done, but I don't think they need to be done violently. Where people are burning down buildings and things like that, I think it's important to listen to them but I don't think it's important to get violent and take action over violence.

**Interviewer:** Alright, so what content did you post online?

**Participant:** I would say I usually post content about my life. What's going on in it. And some other days I usually try and post stuff that will make people laugh and just brighten up their day.

**Interviewer:** Can you remember a time when you were careful about what you chose to like online because of how it might affect other people's contributions and social media feed like on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram?

**Participant:** Yep. Yeah, I remember when the election was going on, I had to be very careful of what to like because I was either going to hurt someone's feelings that I'm friends with him or her or another person's feelings that's in my family.

**Interviewer:** Please tell me about a time when you tried to influence or change the content of what you see on YouTube or Google or social media by searching differently.

**Participant:** I would say there's two in particular on Instagram. There is a way to go in and change your preferences. You could click on it and then hit, "I do not know why I am I seeing this ad" and it'll give you a description and then you can also hit "I don't like seeing this content" and stuff like that. And Twitter also does the same thing where you can prefer not to see this or that post and that kind of thing.

**Interviewer:** Cool. Well, when you are unsatisfied with your search results, how do you adjust your search to change the results?

**Participant:** I try and click on other things that relate more to what I'm searching for and do not click on anything where it does not relate because most of the time you get a brief description when you're on Google of what the article is going to be, and you kind of get a few sentences out of it, so I would just read that kind of thing and stay away from that if it's not what I'm looking for.

**Interviewer:** Well, how do you decide if an online source of information is reliable or credible or not?

**Participant:** Most of the time I look for who wrote it. If I'm looking for something that really is important and I need to know it is reliable, I would look for the source of that article, and then I would Google that person and make sure they are credible with other things.

**Interviewer:** And can you tell me about a time when you double-checked information online to verify if it was credible? You know what made it suspicious? What steps did you take to see if the information was correct? And what did your findings make you feel about your website?

**Participant:** Not to see if something was correct that I would look up, but to kind of double-check that that was what I needed. For example, I needed to order a specific

part and I had to go to a different website to put in my car's information to make sure that it was correct. So, I kind of had to fact-check myself rather than a website.

**Interviewer:** Please tell me about a time that your friends or family distrusted a website or information on a website. Did they double-check the information from a different source of verify that it is credible?

**Participant:** I can't recall a time.

**Interviewer:** Should the media cover stories about fake news or disinformation? Could the media do more to help people verify the credibility of information.

**Participant:** I think the news should definitely make this an important topic because a lot of false information gets spread very easily and it's kind of hard to correct it.

**Interviewer:** The term fake news seems to be everywhere now. What are your thoughts on what is and who's vulnerable to it?

**Participant:** I think everyone is vulnerable to it. Anybody can see an article and read it and then go tell their friend or their family about it, and the next day they could find out that it wasn't accurate at all. I think it is very important to find these fake articles and take them down or do what you can to spread information that they're false.

**Interviewer:** What does it mean for democracy?

**Participant:** Yeah. I would say it's just as important politically not spread false information.

**Interviewer:** Uh, do you think it's a real problem?

**Participant:** Ah. I would say it is because there's a lot of websites out there that are very biased and news outlets that are very biased politically. So, one outlet would be spreading false information about this person and then the other one would be spreading positive information and then they just go back and forth and it never ends.

**Interviewer:** You know what new laws or constitutional amendments might we need for the Internet age?

**Participant:** Ah. I'm not really sure because you could say we could limit the Internet but then it's the Internet. it's always growing. There's not really going to be a bind on it, and it's just going to cause problems down the road if the government starts to try and control the Internet and things like that.

**West Virginia Participant 10 (White/Male/20), interviewed on October 25, 2021**

**Interviewer:** So please offer example on where you've seen fake news. Who are the people who published it? What are they trying to get from it? And what should be done about it.

**Participant:** Most recently I see a lot of fake news about vaccines and people saying kind of odd conspiracy theories that people are being tracked by the man. Things like that and I would just say that that whole topic needs to be shut down because it's obviously not true.

**Interviewer:** Now, is there anything else that you want to share?

**Participant:** No, I don't. I don't think so.

**Interviewer:** Already, what is the date?

**Participant:** It is October 25th, 2021.

**Interviewer:** Your state of residence?

**Participant:** West Virginia.

**Interviewer:** Age?

**Participant:** 20

**Interviewer:** Gender?

**Participant:** Male

**Interviewer:** And your race?

**Participant:** White.

**Interviewer:** And finally, your highest level of education completed?

**Participant:** I guess I'm in school so I would just say high school.